



CONFERENCE
ON



THE SITUATION IN CHINA

UNDER THE AUSPICES OF

THE COMMITTEE OF REFERENCE AND COUNSEL

NEW YORK, FEBRUARY 29, 1912

SEVENTY-FIVE officers, members and furloughed missionaries of twenty-eight Foreign Missions Boards of the United States and Canada having work in China met in New York, February 29, 1912, at the call of the Committee of Reference and Counsel, to consider the extraordinary situation in China and the consequent duty of the home Churches. Much preliminary studying had been done by appointed speakers and there were carefully prepared papers and able discussions on such subjects as: "The Present Situation in China, Its Causes, Elements, and Possible Outcome"—by the Rev. John E. Williams, Vice-President of Nanking University, China; "Effect of the Situation on Mission Work, Attitude and Policy of Missions and Boards"—by the Rev. James L. Barton, D. D., Secretary of the American Board, Boston; "Survey of Present Missionary Occupation and Distribution of Forces, and Union Movements"—by the Rev. D. MacGillivray, D. D., Editor of The China Mission Year Book, Shanghai; "Duty and Opportunity of the Boards in Developing a Christian Medical Profession and in Promoting Philanthropic Work and Social Service"—by Robert C. Beebe, M. D., Superintendent of the Methodist Hospital, Nanking, China; "Enlarged Need of the Bible and a Christian Literature in the New China and How It Is to Be Met"—by the Rev. William I. Haven, D. D., Secretary of the American Bible Society, New York; "How Shall the Boards and Missions Prepare for the Enlarged Evangelistic Opportunity Which Is Following the Political Readjustment in China"—by the Rev. Thomas S. Barbour, D. D., Secretary of the Baptist Society, Boston; "How Shall the Boards and Missions Prepare for the Enlarged Educational Opportunity Which Is Following the Political Readjustment in China"—by the Rev. Frank D. Gamewell, D. D., Educational Superintendent for China of the Methodist Church; "The Chinese Churches and Their Relation to Present Problems"—by the Rev. S. H. Chester, D. D., Secretary of the Southern Presbyterian Board, Nashville; "Special Methods Which the Situation Demands"—by the Rev. Homer C. Stuntz, D. D., Secretary of the Methodist Board, New York; and other topics.

The Conference felt that more time was required to draw up a statement of policies and methods and asked the Committee of Reference and Counsel to do this important work and submit its recommendations to the Boards for their approval. As an aid to the Committee, and in view of frequently published statements that the Boards are often disposed to obstruct union

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movements on the foreign field, the Conference adopted the following resolutions as an unofficial expression of its opinion:

"1. This Conference desires to assure the Missions in the strongest possible manner of its unreserved approval of the effort to accomplish the union of the Christian Church in China and promises the Missions that they will have in such efforts the hearty support of the members of this Conference.

"2. The Conference approves of the fullest possible measure not only of co-operation but of union in all forms of mission work, such as education, preparation and publication of literature, hospitals and philanthropic work.

"3. With deep satisfaction at the establishment and development of the Church of Christ in China, and recognizing the supreme place which the Chinese Church must occupy in the evangelization of the nation, this Conference expresses its sympathy with every purpose of the Church itself to unite in the interests of increased strength and economy and of the effective propagation of the Gospel of Christ."

The spirit of prayer was a marked characteristic of the Conference. The day began with an uplifting devotional service conducted by the Right Rev. Arthur S. Lloyd, D. D., President of the Protestant Episcopal Board, and one of the most solemn periods of the day was the noon hour on "Intercessory Prayer" under the leadership of the Rev. R. P. Mackay, D. D., Secretary of the Canadian Presbyterian Board, Toronto. At the close of the Conference, the following "Message to the Home Churches, the Missions and the Chinese Churches," which had been drawn up, at the request of the Committee, by Mr. Robert E. Speer, was adopted by a rising vote, after which the Conference closed with a brief service of prayer and consecration.

THE MESSAGE OF THE CONFERENCE.

"The representatives of the Foreign Mission Boards of the United States and Canada which are carrying on missionary work in China having carefully considered together the situation which China presents at this hour to the Christian Church, desire to address this word to the Christian forces which are at work in the new republic and to the Christian agencies in North America to which China has looked and is looking now for her main sympathy and assistance.

"The whole world is agreed in recognizing in the transformation of China one of the greatest movements in human history. Whether we consider the immensity of the population affected, the character of the change that is taking place, the magnitude of the interests which are involved, the comparative peacefulness of the crisis, or the significance of the fact that a great and ancient race is undergoing in the period of a decade a radical intellectual and spiritual readjustment, it is evident that it is given to us to witness and have part in a vast movement whose consequences will affect the whole world and be unending.

"This movement, we believe, may become, by God's grace, if the Christian Church is faithful, the regeneration of a nation. For no change of institutions, of political principles, of social order, or of economic conditions can avail to satisfy the deep needs of which China has now become conscious. Political reformation requires a new moral and religious life. All that China has had that is worthy she needs now, and with it she needs also and seems now prepared to receive, the new conceptions of the Gospel, and not these conceptions only but also the power of God in Christ by which alone they may be realized in the life of the nation in this new and wonderful day.

"The time, for which we have long worked and prayed, appears to have come at last in a measure and with a momentum beyond our faith, and we rejoice with the Christian agencies at work in China, with the 11,661 leaders of the Chinese Christian Church, with its 278,628 members, and with the 4,299 missionaries from Western lands, in the unique opportunity which they possess of meeting an inquiring people with the light and life which they are seeking, and of offering to them and to their rulers the knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ, the one true Leader and King of men.

"We rejoice in the measure of unity already attained by the Christian forces in China and in their ability in this hour, without waste or discord, to present to the Chinese people the one faith which we all hold and the one Lord whom we all follow. We rejoice that so many of the men who have wrought for China in this time of national need have been Christian men who have borne their great responsibilities with Christian fidelity and sought to serve their country with Christian unselfishness. With a Christian Church united in its mission and with Christian men serving the State in patriotic and religious devotion, we believe that the prayers of many hearts will be answered that, on the one hand, a pure and unconfused Gospel may be preached to the nation, and that on the other hand the Christian spirit, unmixed with secular misunderstanding or personal ambition, may control the minds of the men who are to bear rule and authority in the new day.

"In the effort to which the Christian forces of the nation will now give themselves with a new zeal, to carry the Gospel far and wide over China and deep into the life of the people, we desire to assure them of the sympathy and support of the Church in the West, and we now make appeal to the Home Church to meet the emergency with unceasing prayer and unwitholding consecration.

"We earnestly renew the appeal made by us in January and supported by President Taft, the American Red Cross, and the China Famine Relief Committee for generous contributions to save the lives of the 3,000,000 people in China who face starvation unless help is given at once. (Contributions may be sent to any Foreign Mission Board, to the Red Cross, or to the China Famine Relief Committee, 1 Madison Avenue, New York City.)

"Especially we ask the Church to pray:

For the people of China, this great and virile nation which, awakened from the torpor of ages by the quickening forces of the modern world, is now called upon to deal with enormous legislative, economic, educational and moral readjustments.

For the Chinese Christians, who share in full measure the privations and problems that are the common lot of their countrymen.

For the missionaries and their work, the adequate expansion of Christian education and evangelization, and the adaptation of mission methods to the needs of the present situation.

For full religious liberty in China.

For perfect union among the Christians of every name.

For a spirit of true independence on the part of the Church in

China and of perfect co-operation with the Missions of the Churches of the West.

For guidance of the new leaders of China, that they may be Christian men and may lead their land forward in wisdom and peace.

For the purity of the Gospel in China, that it may not be misconceived, but that it may be known and experienced as the power of God unto salvation.

For a right attitude on the part of all governments toward the government of China.

For the Manchus and the Chinese alike, that they may find Christ.

"So great an opportunity as God now offers in China is a sovereign summons. It demands of us the enlargement of our horizons, the expansion of our faith, the acceptance of our duty, and the eager and joyful exercise of our fellowship with Christ in ministering to the need of an awakened nation, and in hastening the coming of His world-wide kingdom by an unprecedented advancement. May the Church in China and in the West be found equal to this opportunity!

"We request pastors to read this message to their people, and we appeal to the men and women of the churches by their prayers, their counsels and their enlarged gifts, to aid in meeting the call which is now coming from our Lord in China."

The Conference was marked throughout by breadth of view, a pervasive spiritual atmosphere, and a profound sense of responsibility and privilege. This epitome of its proceedings is sent out in the earnest hope that the message herein given will be widely read and that all the people of God will unite with us in the earnest and prayerful effort to meet aright the extraordinary emergency to which God is summoning His people.

ARTHUR J. BROWN, Chairman.

CHARLES R. WATSON, Secretary.

JAMES L. BARTON.

THOMAS S. BARBOUR.

W. HENRY GRANT.

WALTER R. LAMBUTH.

ARTHUR S. LLOYD.

ROBERT P. MACKAY.

ALEXANDER MCLEAN.

JOHN R. MOTT.

PAUL DE SCHWEINITZ.

T. E. EGERTON SHORE.

HOMER C. STUNTZ.

Committee of Reference and Counsel